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Watchdog Groups Condemn Georgia Power's 2025 IRP

Georgia Power's flawed forecasting once again projects massive, speculative demand

ATLANTA - Georgia Power's newly released 2025 Integrated Resource Plan raises serious concerns about the utility's forecasting practices and motives. Georgia Power predicts 8000 megawatts (MWs) of new demand through the end of 2030 and an increase of more than 2200 MWs in peak demand, on top of staggering demand increases from their 2023 IRP in which they asked for and received an additional 6600 MWs. These staggering increases total 16,800 MWs of new generation, or the equivalent of 8 new Vogtle reactors that would cost \$275 billion. This is a standard Georgia Power playbook of overestimating growth to justify building new generating facilities to deliver rich profits for investors at the expense of hard-working Georgians.

"This IRP is gamesmanship at its worst. By asking for far more generation than is needed, Georgia Power & the Georgia Public Service Commission will end hearings by accepting less than requested, allowing everyone to claim a win for an expensive plan that is unreasonable," said Brionté McCorkle, Executive Director, GCV.

While Georgia Power cites data centers as driving much of the projected growth, experts note that these data centers have not committed to locating in Georgia, nor to Georgia Power as their provider. Even if data centers were to commit to Georgia Power, their energy needs can be met with far less expensive solutions than the massive amounts of expensive gas and coal proposed in this IRP. Georgia Power sidelines solar energy as well as energy efficiency and demand response, solutions which could meet this demand at a fraction of the cost to Georgia ratepayers but are less profitable to the company itself.

Lack of transparency

Another key concern is the lack of independent verification of claimed data center commitments. This lack of transparency is highly unusual for a state regulatory authority: The Georgia Public Service Commission is responsible for regulating Georgia Power in the public interest and setting rates that are just and reasonable. Transparency is a critical part of the process.

Impacts of largest rate increase in state history

The filing comes as Georgia ratepayers have faced the largest rate increase in state history to pay for Plant Vogtle. On May 1, 2024, Georgia Power raised residential base rates 23.7% to pay for Vogtle's expansion, the highest rate increase in state history. As a result, nearly 200,000 Georgia Power residential customers were disconnected in 2024, a 30% increase in disconnections over the same time period in 2023. During that same period Southern Company profits increased more than 43% compared to last year, including \$1.4 billion in Q3 alone, largely due to Georgia Power rate increases and an influx of data centers to its service territories.

New data center rules

On January 23, 2024, the PSC adopted new rules which purport to allow Georgia Power to charge higher rates for data center customers. These rule changes are an obvious ploy to undercut recently introduced legislation to require data centers to pay the full cost of new generation built to serve them. These rule changes are completely discretionary and are a smoke screen to allow the Company to continue doing business without any consumer protections for residential ratepayers who will get saddled with more capital costs as they have in the past, especially if the large load customers don't materialize, or go out of business before their capital costs are fully recovered.

China's AI DeepSeek

Georgia Power's history of self-serving growth projections is especially concerning given the announcement this week that China's AI, DeepSeek, is a faster, smaller and less expensive AI solution that requires far less energy than U.S. rivals, sending tech stocks tumbling. This seems to exactly fit the pattern that demonstrates a changing energy landscape similar to the dropping gas production and solar panel costs in 2008 – 2010 that resulted in every utility except Georgia Power canceling their nuclear projects.

"Georgia Power is trying to pull the same bait-and-switch that has already cost Georgia families billions in high power bills leading to soaring disconnection rates," said Kim Scott, Executive Director, Georgia WAND. ""In 2004 and 2007, they fabricated growth projections to justify the Vogtle nuclear project. That growth never materialized but Georgia ratepayers are stuck with higher rates for the sixty-year depreciation schedule for the reactors. Now they're back with even more outlandish numbers, clearly positioning for another round of profitable construction at ratepayer expense."

Cool Planet Solutions

A consultancy helping energy stakeholders such as utilities, commissions, and businesses understand residential consumer motivations, values and knowledge around energy.

Georgia WAND

Georgia WAND is a nonprofit advocacy group focused on quality of life issues, health hazards resulting from nuclear energy, and social justice grounded in building racial equity.

Center for a Sustainable Coast

The Center for a Sustainable Coast uses science, media, and the law to defend, restore and improve Georgia's environment and quality-of-life.

GCV Education Fund

Georgia Conservation Voters Education Fund mobilizes Georgians to advance climate and environmental justice for a more just and sustainable future.